Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Universal Service Fund
Nonprofit Access Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2022
Grant Application Instructions
Docket 5-NF-2022

Application Deadline
March 1, 2022

Background

The Wisconsin Universal Service Fund (USF) was created to promote and assist with the availability and affordability of telecommunications services in Wisconsin. Companies providing telecommunications services in Wisconsin are required to contribute to the USF. The Commission administers several programs funded by the USF, including the Nonprofit Access Grant Program which provides funding to nonprofit groups to facilitate affordable access to telecommunications services.

Under the requirements of the Nonprofit Access Grant Program, any nonprofit group (defined as an IRS § 501(c)(3) organization) may apply for funding from the USF to cover up to 75% of project or program costs to assist in providing access to telecommunications services for low-income customers and/or customers with a disability. There is no specified dollar limit for any particular project as long as USF requested funding does not exceed 75% of total project costs.

Eligible Applicants

Any nonprofit group as defined as an IRS § 501(c)(3) organization may apply for funding under the Nonprofit Access Grant Program.

Anticipated Funds Available

In accordance with Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125(2)(f), up to $500,000 will be made available in 2022 for the Nonprofit Access Grant Program.

Matching / Contribution Funds Requirement

Applicants are required to provide at least **25% matching funds toward the total project cost** (a three-dollar-for-one-dollar match). For example, if the total project budget is $20,000, no more than $15,000 can be funded from this grant program. A grant request of $20,000 with 25% of the request or $5,000 in matching/contributed funds would **not** meet this requirement. In this case, the project total would be $25,000 and the match requirement would be $6,250. The match is for the entire project request. Matching funds may be provided as cash or in-kind contributions. Matching funds may not include items purchased with USF grant dollars from prior years, nor may the in-kind match items be used to meet the grant match requirement for more than one USF grant cycle. Matching / contribution funds may not be used to meet the grant match requirement for other non-USF grant applications.

Any non-USF funding sources, including federal, state, and private foundations, may be used to meet the matching requirement. In-kind contributions may be professional services that are donated or discounted by the donor. Matching funds, both cash and in-kind contributions, must relate to the proposed project and must be indicated as cash or in-kind on the note column of the budget in the Grants System. In the Grants System matching funds are noted as contributed funded.

The application must identify the source and amount of matching funds. If the source of the match is not the applicant, documentation that matching funds are committed must be provided with the application or prior to release of any funding. If the source is the applicant, a statement of commitment of matching funds or documentation of in-kind funds must be provided with the application or prior to release of any funding.

Application Submission and Deadline

All applicants are required to submit an application using the Commission's on-line grant application system. The PSC Grants System will automatically upload the application to the appropriate Electronic Regulatory Filing (ERF) account when the application is submitted. The PSC Grants System will not permit late applications. Applicants are encouraged to start early and leave plenty of time to work with the new grant application.

The PSC Grants System application process is intended to be simple and straightforward. Applications must be submitted using the PSC Grants System and are due no later than 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 1, 2022. The PSC Grants System will not accept any applications submitted after the deadline. **Applications must be submitted to the Commission via the online PSC Grants System.**

Applications are due and must be submitted on the PSC Grants System no later than 4:00 p.m. CT, Tuesday, March 1, 2022.

Application Procedure

The instructions for completing a Nonprofit Access grant application are in two parts. Both parts are available on the PSC website. The first part of the instructions is the PSC Grants System User's Guide for Grant Applicants and Recipients. The User's Guide provides a detailed overview of the PSC Grants System. The User's Guide provides step by step instructions to create a system account, navigate the on-line grant application, validate the application, and submit the complete application. The PSC Grant account will also provide the on-line form and filing process that grant recipients will use to request reimbursement. The User's Guide is the primary resource an applicant should consult to enter and use the on-line grant system.

The second part of the instructions is this current document. This document, Grant Application Instructions, provides specific guidance on completing an application for an FY 2022 Nonprofit Access grant. These instructions discuss the questions in the narrative section of the application. An applicant should use this supplement to understand what information is requested for each page and each question in the grant application.

Step 1: To begin the application, go to the PSC Grants System. This will open the login page of the PSC Grants System. For the first instance of logging in, an applicant will need to create a system account. (See User's Guide page 2). Remember your User Name and Password. For all subsequent instances, you should be able to log-in to the system with that User Name and Password.

Step 2: On the page titled Available Grants, find the line for the 2022 Nonprofit Access Program and click on 'Apply.' (See User's Guide page 4).

Step 3: The program will now display the application you will fill out. The application is arranged in a series of tabs along the top of the form. Each tab brings a page to the top so you can fill it in. The steps below assume that you will open the tabs in order from left to right. Select the Details tab and fill in the required information. (See User's Guide page 4). Please note that this page has a validation step. You cannot save your entries or move to the next page until you enter the required information and correct any arithmetic errors in your entries. It is very important that you remember to save your work (using the save icon at the bottom of the page) before you leave the page. Any unsaved entries will be lost once you leave the page.

Step 4: Select the Contacts tab and fill in the required information. (See User's Guide page 5 - 6). The program will require that you fill in one Primary Contact. Use the Add New Contact to add additional contacts. A grant recipient can use this page to add additional names or change the Primary Contact for the grant if the recipient has turnover or other change in staff assignment while the grant project is underway.

Step 5: Select the Contributions tab and fill in the required information. Contributions are the Grants System term for match. 25% of the total project costs must be contributions / match. (See User's Guide page 6-7). Please note there is a validation step here as well. You cannot save your entries on this page unless the entries agree with the data entered on the Details page.

Step 6: Select the Budget tab and fill in the required information. (See User's Guide page 7- 8). Again, there is a validation step. You cannot save your entries on the Budget page unless the entries agree with the data entered on the Details and Contributions pages. The Budget page requires that the applicant entered the total cost of all requested budget categories that will be purchased on a single line of the budget. The form requires that you divide the total cost of the item into the portion that will be paid by grant funded and the portion paid by matching funds contribution funded. You must enter zero if no costs are associated with a budget field.

Step 7: Select the Communities tab and fill in the required information. (See User's Guide page 8-9).

Step 8: Select the Narrative tab and fill in the required information. (See User's Guide page 9-10). The Narrative consists of eleven questions. All eleven questions are important. It is possible to write in the phrase 'n/a' and move on to the next question, but that means the applicant is passing on a question that either determines the applicant's eligibility to apply for a grant or contributes to the overall score for the application. Answer every question. Remember to save your work before advancing to the next page of the Narrative.

Narrative

Once submitted in the Grants System, all applications become the property of the Commission, and are subject to Wisconsin's open records laws. Applications will be available for the public to review on the Commission's website by searching under docket 5-NF-2022 in the Electronic Records Filing (ERF) system. Saved, but not submitted applications cannot be viewed by the public.

1. **<u>Eligibility</u>**: Is the applicant a nonprofit organization as defined by the IRS in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code? Answer Yes or No.

The applicant must be a nonprofit to be eligible.
If an applicant answers "no", the application will not be eligible.

2. **<u>Applicant Overview</u>**: Briefly describe the applicant organization(s) including the history, mission and programs or services.

Briefly describe the applicant organization(s)

3. **<u>Project Purpose</u>**: Describe how the project meets at least one of the purposes of the Universal Service Fund?

Describe how the project meets at least one of the following purposes of the Universal Service Fund:
- To assist customers located in areas of the state that have relatively high costs of telecommunication services in obtaining affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunication services.
- To assist low-income customers to obtain affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunication services.
- To assist customers with disabilities to obtain affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunication services.

4. **<u>Project Need</u>**: Describe a public need that is not currently being met, which will be targeted by the project. Describe how this need was identified and defined.

Describe the population that this project will reach, provide data or information on the need.

5. **<u>Project Impact</u>**: Identify up to three realistic, measurable goals or outcomes expected to result from the implementation of the proposed project.

Identify realistic, measurable goals and outcomes expected to result from the implementation of the project. Anticipated outcomes should relate to the Project Need and Purpose described in the application. These goals / outcomes will be used to evaluate the success of the project.

6. **Unduplicated People**: Provide the number of different individuals projected to be served by the proposed project during the performance period (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023). Count each person only once.

Only a whole numeric value will be accepted

7. **Project Implementation**: Describe the activities, programs or services to be implemented throughout the performance period of the project to address the needs and achieve the goals.

Describe the activities to be performed throughout the timeframe of the project, including priorities, sequence and necessary materials, equipment or contracts. Identify providers for each portion of the services or equipment needed for the project. Explain the approach to the problem, plan of work and why this approach was selected.

8. **Project Implementation**: Describe any partnerships, community support or other collaborations with individuals or organizations that will be involved in the proposed project.

Describe any partnerships, community support or other collaborations with individuals or organizations that will be involved in the project. Write N/A if this does not apply to your project.

9. **Project Evaluation**: Explain how the project goals or outcomes identified will be evaluated. Describe the measurement tools, such as pre- and post-testing, surveys, reports and qualitative interviews.

Explain how the project goals and outcomes identified above will be evaluated and by whom. Describe measurement tools, such as pre-testing and post-testing, surveys, inventories, and reports, which will be used to determine the extent to which the project meets each of its goals.

10. **Budget Detail**: Provide justification for the budget, in narrative form. For each category listed in the budget, describe the item and provide additional detail. Explain how the proposed project meets the desired public need in a least-cost manner.

Rent for general administrative purposes may <u>not</u> be included as a grant funded expense; however, it can be included as a contribution funded in-kind cost for matching purposes.

For each budgeted expense please provide a short narrative of cost details. If you have a labor cost of $10,000 on the budget form, the applicants should provide details including the position, the amount of time anticipated on the project and the rate of pay. For example, Digital Navigator, 0.25 FTE, $22 / hr. If the project will be done by in-house staff, explain why that approach was chosen. Identify the providers of the telecommunications services or equipment, and provide a specific description of the components of the project. Administrative costs should only include costs directly attributable to the project. If a percentage of the organization's overhead is used to

determine administrative costs, the amount and what is included in that percentage must be described.

11. **<u>Additional Information</u>**: For applicants that received previous awards, discuss past performance and how this application relates to previous awards. For new applicants, provide any additional information on the organization or the proposed project.

For applicants that received funding in previous cycles of the Nonprofit Access Grant Program, reference previous successes and provide statistics describing the previous award and how this application builds on that success.

Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Screening

Commission staff will conduct an initial screening of all applications. The applications will be screened for: addressing the Universal Service Fund Purpose, completeness, eligibility of applicant as a nonprofit organization, and the commitment of at least 25 percent matching funds.

Applications not meeting the initial screening requirements may not be considered for funding.

2. Application Review

A panel of technical or program professionals will review applications passing the initial screening. Reviewers will use a rating checklist that scores each application based on the ***grant application*** described above. Results of this analysis and review will be reported in a memorandum to the Commissioners.

3. Final Decision on Grant Awards

After the screening and review process is complete, the Commission will decide which grants to award. The Commission makes its decisions in Open Meetings of the Commission. The Commission will notify all grant applicants of its decision by adopting and serving on all applicants an Order awarding grants.

In making the final grant funding decisions, the Commission shall consider information including the following:

- The basis of the public need to be met.
- The degree to which the Program Purpose is met.
- The intended project goals and outcomes
- The overall cost of the proposed project or program relative to the addressed public need.

The Commission may consider other factors in its decision-making such as: analysis provided by staff, analysis of the review panel, public comments filed on the applications, geographic

distribution of the proposed grants, diversity of needs addressed by the proposed grants, the number of previous USF grants awarded to the applicant, cost of the project relative to the number of individuals receiving benefits, and availability of funds.

Grant Agreement, Reporting and Payment Process

The anticipated performance period for these grants is July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023. An executed Grant Agreement will be required of all Grant Recipients. The Commission will provide the appropriate forms for grantees to use to request reimbursement and submit reports.

False, Misleading, or Omitted Statements

False or misleading statements, or omissions that render the information provided on an application to be false or misleading, are grounds for rejection of an application, for denial, or for termination of funding. In addition, the Commission reserves the right to take any other action allowed by law.

For Further Information, Contact:

Laura Fay, Universal Service Fund and Digital Equity Manager
Email: Laura2.Fay@wisconsin.gov
Web: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/NonProfitGrants.aspx

For questions concerning the Commission's PSC Grants System, contact Alex Fortney
alex.fortney@wisconsin.gov.

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
North Tower, 6th Floor
Hill Farms State Office Building
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705